<u>**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**</u>

1.   A method for automatically provisioning a plurality of computing devices in accordance with established policies, the method comprising the steps of:

      creating a plurality of templates reflecting said policies;

5   expanding at least one template at a central location; and

      providing the expanded information to said plurality of computing devices.

2.   The method of claim 1, further comprising

      interpreting the expanded information by agents which are respectively

10 resident on each of said plurality of computing devices.

3.   The method of claim 1, wherein the structure of said plurality of templates includes conditional statements.

4.   The method of claim 3, wherein at least one of the plurality of templates reflects policies applicable to all of the plurality of computing devices.

15 5.   The method of claim 3, wherein at least one of the plurality of templates reflects policies applicable to a subset of the plurality of computing devices.

6.   The method of claim 3, wherein at least one of the plurality of templates reflects policies applicable to a particular type of the plurality of computing devices.

20 7.   The method of claim 1, wherein said policies are security polices regarding access to the plurality of computing devices.

8.   A system for automatically provisioning a plurality of computing devices in accordance with established policies, the system comprising:

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a database system which stores a plurality of templates which reflect said polices;

a plurality of agents which are respectively resident on each of said plurality of computing devices, and which communicate with said database system to obtain information with regard to provisioning and maintenance of the respective computing devices; and

a communications gateway through which communication messages are exchanged between said agents and said database system, wherein said communications gateway is configured to:

retrieve the plurality of templates;

expand the plurality templates; and

provided the expanded information to said plurality of agents.

9.   The system of claim 8, wherein the structure of said plurality of templates includes conditional statements.

10.   The system of claim 9, wherein at least one of the plurality of templates reflects policies applicable to all of the plurality of computing devices.

11.   The system of claim 9, wherein at least one of the plurality of templates reflects policies applicable to a subset of the plurality of computing devices.

12.   The system of claim 9, wherein at least one of the plurality of templates reflects policies applicable to a particular type of the plurality of computing devices.

13.   The system of claim 7, wherein said policies are security polices regarding access to the plurality of computing devices.